**Huck Seminar Prompts**

To prepare for our discussion, carefully read the questions below. You *are required* to type up ideas/thoughtlines and questions in preparation and find passages or quotes that you think relevant. Feel free to bring in outside research if you desire, as long as you cite this in your notes and give credit during discourse. Review the preparatory notes rubric before the seminar. Your notes for the seminar will be handed in for a grade -- at least one page of typed notes per question.  
  
**SEMINAR QUESTIONS:** *Group A*  
  
**1. The ending of Huckleberry Finn has been criticized as abrupt, shallow, and unsatisfying. James Cox, a literary critic, on the other hand, defends the ending by saying that *we* are Tom who "safely" frees the slave who is already free. How do you interpret Cox, and what do you see as the purpose of the ending? What are the aspects of the ending you see as most compelling or most frustrating? What does the ending do to your perception of Huck?**  
  
**2. If we consider, as Twain says, that the novel celebrates the triumph of a "sound heart" over a "deformed conscience," what are the steps in that process? Do these steps suggest a growth akin to the bildungsroman model, or not? What elements signify the sound heart? Which signify a deformed conscience? Do you think conscience really suffer defeat, or is there more of a dialectic between a sound heart and deformed conscience? What happens as a result of this dialectic? What is the product of the conflict? For extra textual discussion: Is there anything deformed in our own individual or national conscience or mores?**  
  
**3. Identify and discuss the literary techniques used by Mark Twain in Chs. 20 - 23 in *Huckleberry Finn*. How do they add to the satire and/or help convey meaning? Consider techniques such as: figures of speech, vernacular, narrative techniques, sentence structure, diction, organization, syntax, detail, imagery, exaggeration, understatement, irony, or tone.**  
  
**4. Discuss the different permutations of family in the text and consider Huck's relationship to these families and your sense of Twain’s commentary. What flaws do you notice? What graces? How does family define us, in a broad sense -- what do we search for in a family? (it is expected that this discussion would move to these broader, out-of-text realms, and you should have notes that do so as well).**

**Socratic Seminar Discussion Questions**

***Group B***

**BEFORE OUR SEMINAR**   
To prepare for our discussion, carefully read the questions below. You *are required* to type up ideas/thoughtlines and questions in preparation and find passages or quotes that you think relevant. Feel free to bring in outside research if you desire, as long as you cite this in your notes and give credit during discourse. Review the preparatory notes rubric before the seminar. Your notes for the seminar will be handed in for a grade -- at least one page of typed notes per question.  
  
**SEMINAR QUESTIONS:**  
**1. Are conclusions drawn from interpretations or are interpretations drawn from conclusions? In other words, is there any possibility for an unbiased interpretation of a text, or do aspects of our own cultural contexts, our own societal lenses affect how we interpret (and how others interpret)? For instance, how do cultural ideas about slavery and the n-word affect our interpretation? Or, does the 21st C debate about the n-word, modern literary analyses, or the teacher’s bias rub off on us? Does *Huck Finn,* the novel itself, pressure us to question societal norms or our culture?**  
  
**2. Appearance versus reality is a major theme in *Huck Finn*. Using specifics from the book, discuss this very prevalent theme. How does this element of the novel resonate with other thematic elements? Does Huck’s perception of reality change when he’s on the raft, and if it does, how? Why? Consider also how the notion of performance and taking on different personas relates to this discussion.**  
  
**3. Identify and discuss the literary techniques used by Mark Twain in Chs. 33 - 37 in *Huckleberry Finn*. How do they add to the satire and to the experience? Consider techniques such as: figures of speech, vernacular, narrative techniques, sentence structure, diction, organization, syntax, detail, imagery, exaggeration, understatement, irony, and tone.**  
  
**4. Consider your readings and study of the antebellum south/ civil war/reconstruction/Jacksonian America in history, then reflect on the way tensions and themes in the text connect with key aspects of those studies. Can you make any arguments about how Twain comments on American society? What elements of society are most ridiculed and how? It is expected that this prompt will spiral into broader discussion about perceptions about and resonances with our history in progress today, and you should have notes on this.**

**Socratic Seminar Discourse Rubric**

***Primary Criteria:***  
**·Often refers to specific examples and ideas in the text whenever she makes a point.**  
**·Demonstrates a thorough understanding and interpretation of the text on both a literal and abstract level; has no evidence of misreading.**  
**·Adds several meaty comments to the discussion; asks critical questions.**  
  
***Secondary Criteria:***  
**·Makes comments that are concise, meaningful, and clearly relevant to the discussion.**  
**·Speaks clearly.**  
**·Listens to others’ comments and refers to them (either to build upon or to refute) in a very thoughtful and engaged manner – there is a sense of improvisation and riffing to her engagement with others’ thoughts.**  
**·Conveys enthusiasm and respect for the discussion and the participants through her conduct and comments.**

**Preparatory Notes Rubric**

**· You must have one page of typed notes per prompt/discussion topic.**  
  
**· For each topic, you must have one short, written paragraph that conveys one aspect of your response to the prompt. In other words, while the bulk of your notes for each topic can be in outline form, you should chose one point to elaborate in written form: 3 – 5 *well-crafted* sentences.**  
  
**· Your notes should convey a progression of thought – a line of inquiry.**  
  
**· You must have three questions written out that can be posed in relation to the topic.**